12/24/75

Dear Dick, Gellen

With thanks for your speedy reaction to my letter my apologies for not letting you know I'd not be home yesterday. Like everything else in my life, it turned out backward, a characteristic that can be exploited. The doctor looked at my legs, felt the calves and told me I'm getting along so well he doesn't have to see me for a month. Before I got home his nurse phoned with orders to increase the level of anti-coagulent, based on the day before's blood-test that was delayed reaching him. Where he'd told me to double the time between tests he cancelled this and directed the same schedule of testing.

Physically I don't feel bad, except that from inactivity I'm getting fat and what I used to do to prevent this (partially) is something I enjoy, physical activity. About all permitted to me is walking and gradually I'm extending that. I'm making a conscientious effort to get more rest but sometimes, even with sleeping pills, strange to me, I can't. However, I stay in bed and get that much rest and usually doze off and on when I can't sleep. The problem is an active mind that has so much to do, to try to prevent, and what may be called fights to plan.

Within the limitations of phlebitis I am quite active. I'm working an average 14-hour day. But much of the time is packaging books (during rests with legs elevated) and trying to just keep up. No present time for writing. For the immediate future that can change only with what I can't expect, someone I can hire to help.

I'll write Gray separately. Thanks for the suggestions. For the moment my belief is that it should be limited to Post Mortem because the first and third of the series are close to needing reprinting and I can't do it right now. I want to add to both and with a condensation I'd want to keep both in print. I guess I could suggest Whitewash IV to Gray. I have enough of them. The transcript alone can sell it, especially to the young and because of the current CIA interest.

Right now publishers are going crazy for assassination books and that is what almost without exception they are printing. Vantage is reprinting Sylvia Meagher's superb book in March. Dell has brought Lane's out and in my heavy mail there has been no single reference to it.

The problems I face begin with publisher attitudes to me and are most serious in their not understanding the subject. Meaning the potential of solid, serious work. This is opposed to all their experience.

The plain and simple truth is that there is virtually nothing in any book that did not originate in mine. Sylvia has a few things in hers. A current and excellent one by Howard Roffman focuses narrowly and well and with a new publisher will, I think, sell well as it deserves to. It has an excellent formula reflected in the title, Presumed Guilty. In the topics it touches it does have a few new things.

But in the basic material, to the [illegible] there is ownership and pioneering, it is mine. This is neither boasting nor [illegible]cation but is one way of addressing what can be done with a condensation. Also ho..

We should have learned that gambling with an unpromoted paperback is to put truck-drivers in a position to kill the book because they control what goes onto the racks, they don't read, and they work partly on commission. Unless a major paperback publisher went for the idea and was ready to put a pot into it, it would be a loser. Unless it is a best-seller it is a loser for me because of what it can cost me in sales. An original paperback, which would accomplish one of my ends, getting the word around, seems improbable unless someone like Avon would make the investment required. It would mean a lot of effort.

However, in the traditional way it could work out fine. This is to sell the paperback through the attention the hardback gets. The ideal way is to sell the paperback rights to a publisher whomplaces the hardback.

Aside from Howard's really fine work there is not now and there seems not likely to be a worthwhile hardback of any kind on the subject. I rejoice for Howard on this. May he sell a million copies!

What few publishers would be willing to believe is that this is one of the hottest-selling subjects in years and the only reason that for several years there have been no sales is publishers. They commissioned no worthwhile works and what appeared was works of sycophancy no one of which ever did well except perhaps the different one, Manchester's. Publishers underestimate the people and the market on this subject.Right now it is hottest without anything new except Congressional interest that has as yet produced nothing and doesn't seem likely to and a few provocative leaks.

So, I favor a hardback condensation, as small as possible in size. Willingness of the reader to believe is not now a factor. This means an enormous amount can be eliminated. I have in mind a book that can be touted as the condensation of the work that did it all, brought it all to light. Post Mortem is something separate. I'm talking about the Whitewash series only, the books based on the Warren Material.

I don't think that it is realiztic to set a maximum size without more thought and the collaborator's belief. But I know there are whole hunks that can be left out today. Like my personal epilogues and introductions. The second book can have parts added to the appropriate sections of the first. Much of the third is not needed but can be handled the same way. This is not the work in which to do what I did, build the case. This is the work in which to report it. The difference is vast. Whitewash IV and a few things ("new material added") could and should be handled separately, as a lawyer handles motive. Its texts are actually short anyway.

So I'm really talking about the shortest possible hardback. This means the least expensive to manufacture and the lowest possible selling price. Manufacturing can be less costly now due to a new process I use in Post Mortem. It can be used with a hardback, effeciently. The new printer I've been dealing with is fine but I don't want to be the printer. I don't want the same handicaps and to spend my life mailing books.

Until I know a deal that holds some promise is in the offing there isn't much I can do by way of approaching a condenser. It would require a non-paranoidal knowledge of the field, the material, the significance. It would be a forever job for a good editor who lacks this knowledge.

I know two reporters who would be ideal. However, I don't know if either is in a position to. I'll ask. One is retired but is not a navel-gazer. He leads his own exceptionally active life. The other is a working reporter. This not only gives him a regular day's work but means giving up his private life and perhaps running some problems with his employer. Meagher and Howard can't compete with themselves. And after taking a quarter out to promote his own book Howard will be going back to law school.

Most of the so-called experts the majority of whom are in their best moments no worse than insane are fabricators who do not know anything about the actualities. Some, like Lane, when they can't avoid it, breeze near fact and truth.

So, unless there is an exceptional editor available and a dedicated publisher, the possibilities are limited. What I think is not limited is the financial return. My own history proves this.

When I was in New York on the McDonald thing you raised the question of a condensation and I think perhaps on another occasion.

I would have to do all or most of the promotion. Because I am limited in what I can do this would as of now mean the yield per book or a hardback. After initial TV appearances a publisher might arrange I can do and always do do much by phone.Radio.

There have been many changes at S&S. They went for WW big at Pocket, but Shimkin saw those yawning gates over Calories Don't Count. They have tended toward what they can promote as exposes. A real one may scare them. Pocket predicted in 1965 that Whitewash would be the year's best-selling book until Shimkin took a very practical position. he did have those realities to face. You ran into this with Oswald in New Orleans, remember? That is what was ruinous to us.

Publishers don't trust promises, but I don't want to publish my next book. The five chapters I had done five years ago were very well received at Bantam on the editorial level but there was a policy decision against the subject. They have boiled the pot with a plagiarizer named Anson now, a formula book. I think it will be a good one, especially with an editor. So, I have this added reason for a hardback connection.

The natural promos for a good p.r. department are a flack's dream. You should remember some. The latest is the FBI's certification that I know more about the JFK assassination than anyone in the FBI. Who ever heard of THAT as a legit promo?

And this is without adding anything new, as I can in debates that if agreed to will be sensational and if not will generate sales. If and when the time comes I'll spell this out.

Remember we are talking about the first book on the Warren Commission and most of the original work on it when suddenly it is hot all over again in a different era. We've had Watergate and few see a halo around the ghost of St. Edgar Hoover.

And there will be more cases in court, my cases, for a while. Any one can cause a major sensation with the changed atmosphere. Any development in the King/Ray case can sell anything with my name on it.

So, while I've given you an idea of some of the problems for you to think about I also believe this can make money if done right. And over a period of years. It is a subject that will not die no matter what happens. That is why I'm going to have to reprint a book more than 10 years old when you have to be Sherlock Holmes to find out how to get it. It will be my fifth printing of it. Without a cent for ads or promos.

I guess the real problem begins with getting somebody to see and believe.

And to understand that the time is now. There is no indication that the Church committee or its subcommittee are serious. The efforts in the House are handicapped by dependence upon the self-promoters and the political needs of the Members, as they perceive them. Meanwhile, there is an enormous new effort to cover up within the government. But it requires some disclosures and these boil the pot.

Assuming what I report to be real, have you any estimate or ideas?

Unless there is something unexpected medically I do not expect to be away until the middle of next month. I'm usually away Monday mornings until about 10:30. When Lil starts her tax work I'll be driving her to and from her office. And probably doing walking there, where it is flat, which would mean no answer weekdays from the first to 4/16 unless I'm home.

Hope you all have a nice holiday and a good year.

Best,